

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7122

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USIA FOR IOP/INA/IPS/IBS

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BG

SUBJ: BDG TAKES CONTROL OF PRESS

REF: DACCA 2641

1. SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN GAVE THE COUP DE GRACE TO BANGLADESH'S ALREADY-WITHERING FREE PRESS WHEN HE PROMULGATED THE NEWSPAPERS (ANNULMENT OF DECLARATION) ORDINANCE ON JUNE 16, CONFIRMING LONG-STANDING RUMORS THAT HE PLANNED A PRESS TAKEOVER. AS A RESULTS, THIS MORNING, ONLY FOUR DAILIES, ALL UNDER BDG CONTROL, ARE LEFT. THEY ARE: BANGLADESH TIMES, BANGLADESH OBSERVER, ITTEFAG, AND DAINIK BANGLA. (IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, 122 PERIODICALS OF VARIOUS KINDS ARE LEFT TO PUBLISH.) BANGLADESH OBSERVER AND DAINIK BAXGLA WERE ALREADY UNDER EFFECTIVE BDG CONTROL BEFORE THE ORDINANCE WAS ISSUED SINCE THEY WERE ABANDONED PROPERTY. THUS, IT IS THE BANGLADESH TIMES AND ITTEFAG WHICH ARE ACQUIRED BY BDG FIAT.

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2. INsofar AS BANGLADESH TIMES IS CONCERNED, YESTERDAY'S ACTIONS MEANS VERY LITTLE SINCE SHEIKH FAZLUL HAG MONI, ONE OF THE THREE BAKSAL SECRETARIES, REMAINS AS EDITOR. FOR ITTEFAG, THE CONSEQUENCES ARE FAR MORE SERIOUS AND SADDENING. THE FAMILY OF TOFAZZAL HUSSAIN (MANIK MAI) HAS LOST CONTROL OF THE PAPER. EDITOR MANJU HOSSAIN, MANIK MIA'S SON, WHO HAD ALREADY TOLD SHEIKH MUJIB OF HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO REMAIN IF THE BDG TOOK CONTROL, HAS BEEN REPLACED. UNDER THE HUSSAIN FAMILY'S AEGIS, ITTEFAG HAD ENDEAVORED TO PROVIDE UNBIASED NEWS ACCOUNTS AND ARTICLES, AND HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY ALONE (PARICULARLY AFTER THE CLODNEE OXYHOLIDAY) IN OFFERING OBJECTIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT. UNHAPPLILY FOR SHEIKH MUJIB, ITTEFAG ALSO ENJOYED THE LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY PAPER IN BANGLADESH,KA GONICALLY#AS A RESULT OF MANIK MAI'S PRE-INDEPENDENCE SUPPORT OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE AND SHEIKH MUJIB.

3. THE BANGLADESH PRESS HAD DEMONSTRATED GROWING IMPOTENCE OVER THE LAST YEAR, A U ONLY HOLIDAY AND ITTEFAG FAEMED WILLING TO CRITICIZE THE BDG (THOUGH CAREFULLY SKIRTING OUTRIGHT CRITICISM OF SHEIKH MUJIB). WITH HOLIDAY CLOSED AND ITTEFAG EMMASCULATED, THE PRESS WILL NOW OFFER LITTLE BY WAY OF EITHER NEWS OR COMMENT. IT WILL, OF COURSE, TELL US EVEN MORE THAN BEFORE OF THE WONDERS OF BAKSAL, THE BDG, THE "SECOND REVOLUTION" AND SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN. BOSTER

NOTE BY OCT: #TEXT AS RECEIVED.

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